

Message Text

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SUBJECT: REVIEW OF POPULATION POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

REF: STATE 112325

GENERAL REVIEW OF POPULATION TRENDS IN COLOMBIA, AND
PROPOSED RESPONSES TO PROBLEM CONTAINED IN AID HEALTH,
SECTOR ANALYSIS OF MAY 1974. COMMENTS KEYED TO SPECIFIC
QUESTIONS POSES PARA 2 REFTEL FOLLOW:

A. COLOMBIAN POPULATION APPEARS TO BE GROWING
CURRENTLY AT A RATE OF ABOUT 2.7 PERCENT PER YEAR, HAVING
DECLINED FROM A MAXIMUM RATE DURING THE 1960S OF ABOUT
3.5 PERCENT. CURRENT TENTATIVE RESEARCH SEEMS TO INDICATE
THAT THE RATE MAY FALL CLOSE TO 2 PERCENT WITHIN FOUR YEARS.
THE COLOMBIAN POPULATION IS APPROXIMATELY 60 PERCENT URBAN
AT THE PRESENT TIME, AND IS EXPECTED TO BE 67 PERCENT URBAN
BY 1980.

1) THIS DECLINE IN THE POPULATION GROWTH RATE HAS
CLEARLY IMPROVED DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS FOR THE COUNTRY,
THOUGH RAPID POPULATION GROWTH WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE A
RETARD EFFECT ON DEVELOPMENT FOR A LONG TIME INTO THE
FUTURE. NEVERTHELESS, GIVEN THE SLOWDOWN IN BIRTH RATES
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AND THE FACT THAT THE POPULATION IS ALREADY HEAVILY URBAN,

IT APPEARS THAT PROSPECTS FOR THE TEXT DECADE ARE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE FAVORABLE THAN THEY WERE DURING THE LAST DECADE.

2) ALTHOUGH THE COUNTRY WILL CONTINUE TO DEMAND LARGE AMOUNTS OF SOME COMMODITIES (E.G., WHEAT), THERE IS CURRENTLY NO INDICATION OF ANY SECULAR TREND TOWARDS INCREASED DEPENDENCE ON THE U.S. FOR FOOD OR OTHER RESOURCES. IN FACT, IT MAY WELL BE THAT COLOMBIA CAN MAKE A NET POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO WORLD FOOD AVAILABILITES OVER THE NEXT DECADE ALTHOUGH THIS WILL DEPEND ON WHETHER THE GOC ADOPTS IN THE FUTURE REALISTIC LONG TERM AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS. IT DOES APPEAR, HOWEVER, THAT PROBLEMS MAY ARISE WITH REGARD TO TRADE WITH THE U.S. THE LABOR FORCE WILL CONTINUE TO GROW AT RATE EXCEEDING 3 PER CENT FOR MOST OF THE NEXT TWO DECADES. THE GOC WILL PROBABLY ATTEMPT TO MAXIMIZE THE GROWTH OF EMPLOYMENT BY EMPHASIZING EXPORTS OF MANUFACTURERS. THIS IN TURN WILL LEAD TO DEMANDS FOR INCREASED MARKET ACCESS TO THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, ESPECIALLY THE US, FOR PRODUCTS, SUCH AS TEXTILES, WHERE COLOMBIA HAS A COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE.

3) WHILE POPULATION GROWTH COULD CONCEIVABLY CONTINUE TO CONTRIBUTE TO DOMESTIC POLITICAL INSTABILITY, IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT SUCH GROWTH, IN AND OF ITSELF, WILL CREATE DISRUPTIVE INTERNATIONAL BEHAVIOR OR INSTABILITY OF SUCH PROPORTION AS TO BE OF DIRECT CONCERN TO THE U.S.

B. (1) WE BELIEVE THAT IT IS DIFFICULT FOR THE U.S. BY ITSELF TO PRODUCTIVELY FOCUS INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION ON THE POPULATION PROBLEM. AT LEAST WITHIN THE COLOMBIAN CONTEXT, IT SEEMS IMPORTANT FOR THE US TO MAINTAIN A LOW PUBLIC PROFILE, AND TO WORK THROUGH HOST COUNTRY ORGANIZATIONS. IN ADDITION, U.N. EFFORTS TO PROMOTE A WORLD POPULATION YEAR SHOULD BE SUPPORTED. THE U.N. SHOULD, HOWEVER, BE ENCOURAGED TO CARRY OUT SUCH ACTIVITIES MORE AGRESSIVELY THAN THEY HAVE IN THE PAST, AT LEAST IN COLOMBIA. NEVERTHELESS, WE FEEL THAT THE EMPHASIS OF POPULATION CONCERN SHOULD BE PRIMARILY ON CREATING DELIVERY SYSTEMS TO GET FAMILY PLANNING TO THE RURAL POOR RATHER THAN ON CONVINCING ELITES (WHO ARE OFTEN ALREADY CONVINCED) THAT THE WORLD HAS A POPULATION PROBLEM.

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2) IN OUR OPINION VIGOROUS ACTIVITY BY LOCAL FAMILY PLANNING ASSOCIATIONS COUNTINUES TO BE THE BEST MEANS OF CONVINCING LOCAL AUTHORITIES OF THE DANGER OF RAPID POPULATION GROWTH. SUCH ACTIVITY SHOULD EMPHASIZE THE FACT THAT BIRTH RATES ARE HIGHEST AMONG THE POOREST SECTORS OF THE POPULATION, WHERE INADEQUATE NUTRITION DURING THE FIRST SEVERAL YEARS OF LIFE CONDEMN SUCH CHILDREN TO BE LESS INTELLIGENT THAN THEIR MIDDLE-

CLASS COUNTERPARTS. IN THIS REGARD, MAINTENANCE OF A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PL480 TITLE II COMMODITY PROGRAMS AND FAMILY PLANNING ACTIVITIES MAY PROVE DESIRABLE.

3) THE U.S. SHOULD CONTINUE TO EXPERIMENT WITH ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF GAINING ACCEPTANCE OF FAMILY PLANNING, BUT WE HAVE NO CONCRETE PROPOSALS FOR NEW INITIATIVES. BECAUSE OF THE SENSITIVITY OF THE ISSUE IN MANY SOCIETIES THERE IS NO SINGLE WAY OR GROUP OF WAYS IN WHICH INCREASED ACCEPTANCE CAN OR SHOULD BE PROMOTED. RATHER, THE PROBLEM IS ONE OF USING THE BEST JUDGEMENTS OF THE MOST HIGHLY-QUALIFIED AND SENSITIVE INDIVIDUALS WE CAN FIND TO MANAGE SUCH PROGRAMS. WE DO FEEL, HOWEVER, THAT THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING BETTER TECHNIQUES MIGHT BE SIGNIFICANTLY ADVANCED BY THE CREATION OF A REGIONAL CENTER FOR FAMILY PLANNING STUDIES AND TRAINING FOR LATIN AMERICA, PERHAPS UNDER THE AUSPICES OF ONE OF THE U.N. OR OTHER INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES. SUCH A CENTER, OPERATING WITH A CONSIDERABLY WIDER SCOPE THAN THE ASIAN CENTER IN HAWAII, COULD SPEED THE TRANSFER OF TECHNIQUES AMONG LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES. BECAUSE OF THE VARIETY OF ACTIVITIES OF A PIONEERING NATURE BEING CARRIED OUT IN COLOMBIA BY A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT INSTITUTIONS, COLOMBIA MIGHT WELL BE SELECTED AS THE SITE OF SUCH A REGIONAL CENTER.

C. (1) WE SUGGEST THAT THE U.S. MAINTAIN MAXIMUM FLEXIBILITY IN ITS POPULATION PROGRAMS, ALLOWING THE MIX OF BILATERAL, MULTILATERAL AND PRIVATE EFFORTS TO VARY WIDELY FROM COUNTRY TO COUNTRY, DEPENDING ON CIRCUMSTANCES. THE POPULATION PROGRAM IN COLOMBIA HAS BEEN HINDERED AT LEAST IN THE SHORT RUN, BY A DOCTRINAIRE APPROACH TO THE DIVISION OF LABOR AMONG AGENCIES. IN ADDITION, REQUIREMENTS FOR RAPID PHASE-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DOWN OF US INVOLVEMENT IN SPECIFIC PROGRAMS SEEMS DETREMENTAL TO CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE OF CONCERN FOR THE SERIOUS NATURE OF THE PROBLEM. DISCUSSIONS THAT IMPLY AN EARLY END TO SIGNIFICANT U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN SPECIFIC PROJECTS CAN BE DETREMENTAL TO PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT ENTHUSIASM AND FRUSTRATING TO THOSE WORKING IN SUCH PROJECTS.

2) THE WORK OF OTHER DONORS HAS BEEN QUITE PRODUCTIVE IN THE PAST, THOUGH IT APPEARS TO US THAT RELATIVELY TOO MUCH EFFORT HAS BEEN EXPENDED BY OTHER DONORS ON DEMOGRAPHIC RESEARCH AND TOO LITTLE ON ACTUAL POPULATION CONTROL WORK. OTHER DONORS MIGHT BE ENCOURAGED TO ALTER THEIR MIX IN THE DIRECTION OF GREATER INVOLVEMENT IN DELIVERY OF BIRTH CONTROL

TECHNIQUES.

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